

**1st Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

*God is the shepherd who will come to our rescue.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14**

*If Christ were returning tomorrow, how might you prepare to welcome him?*

**Gospel: Mark 1:1-8**

*God's coming is prepared for as John the Baptist modeled it: his words, his wardrobe, and his life witness.*

Are we There yet?

**God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good.**

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent and as always we are blessed with some truly rich readings. In all of our lessons today we are assured that God will indeed come to us, enter into, our lives. These are really media rich readings today. As Dcn. Pat and I did our joint prep we both began chiming in with the words from *Godspell*, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord....." The stirring words from Isaiah are found in Handel's *Messiah*. Then the lesson from 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, reminded me of both the Beattle's song, "Time in a bottle" and the Counting Crows' song whose lyrics went, "Don't it always seem to go / that you don't know what you've got till it's gone; / they paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Last week we were all encourage to "be alert", "be aware." This week the emphasis would be on "waiting" patiently or utilizing well the time we have been given. Have you ever had the experience of beginning a family trip somewhere and shortly after you start, one of the children chime in, "Daddy (Mommy) are we there yet?" Or maybe you have the recollection of being that child. Patiently you responded, "Soon." Then with each repeated query a little less patiently with our response.

It is an interesting phenomenon that points out that 80% of Americans are waiting for something significant to happen: getting married, having a baby, finding a job, retiring, a destination vacation. At every stage of life we find something to look forward to. Yet I know from my reaction in grocery lines or congested traffic or the birthing room at the hospital, that I am not very good at waiting. So like my children on a trip I respond with "Are we there yet?"

If you were certain that Jesus was coming again tomorrow, what would you do to prepare, to get ready for it. There is a cute story about New York. People came running into St. Patrick's and excitedly reported to the Archbishop that Jesus was coming down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Reportedly the Archbishop responded "look busy!" My friends there is no doubt that Jesus wants to enter our lives, and that we must prepare a space for him to enter, because if we don't, something else will fill that space in. There truly is no limit to the ways in which God chooses to enter our lives and therefore every juncture of our lives can be a place of encounter with the divine. Isn't that awesome to contemplate? Are we there yet?

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel notes, "To sense the presence of God, one must learn to be present to God." (*God in Search of Man*, Farrer, Straus and Giroux, New York: 1983). This would mean that we must free up some time in our life to offer that space to God. Much like a pet can do as it sits in your lap or by your side while you pet it. Comfort, give comfort to my people. Are we there yet?

The other lesson for me, this week, is the model presented to us in Mark's Gospel: John the Baptist. "The Voice" crying out in the wilderness, sustaining himself on locust and honey. The Marcan Evangelist was announcing a new intervention of God in the world through the persons and ministries of John and Jesus. A movement from the old covenant to the new. We too have a voice and as we wait do we tell those we encounter, our family, friends, associates, colleagues, and strangers of the value of our faith in Jesus. For me Henri Nouwen summarizes it well in his book, *Wounded Healer*, a person of prayer "is one who is able to recognize in others the face of the Messiah and make visible what was hidden, make touchable what was unreachable." The person of prayer "is a leader precisely because through his articulation of God's Word within themselves can lead others out of confusion to clarification." (Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y.: 1972). Are we there yet?

We are invited this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent to almost hold our breath, as God does his athletic act of leaping from eternity into time, from heaven to earth, from Spirit to flesh, from mystery to history. We are invited to stand still as the Divine Artist begins painting and sculpting our image within his. We are invited to be a voice crying out from our wilderness "Here is our God!" Are we there yet? What must I do to clear the space?

God is good, **all the time.** All the time, **God is good.**